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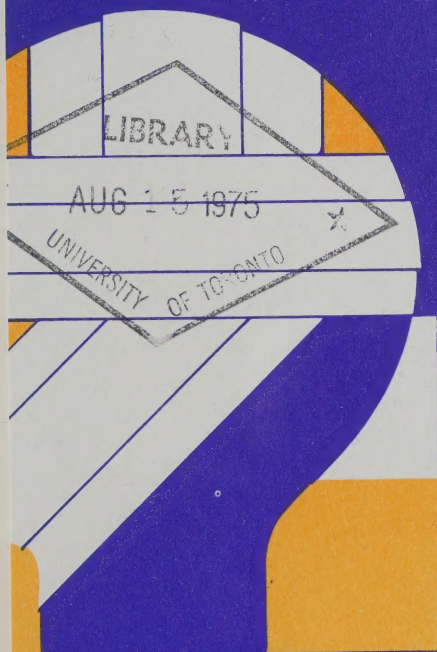
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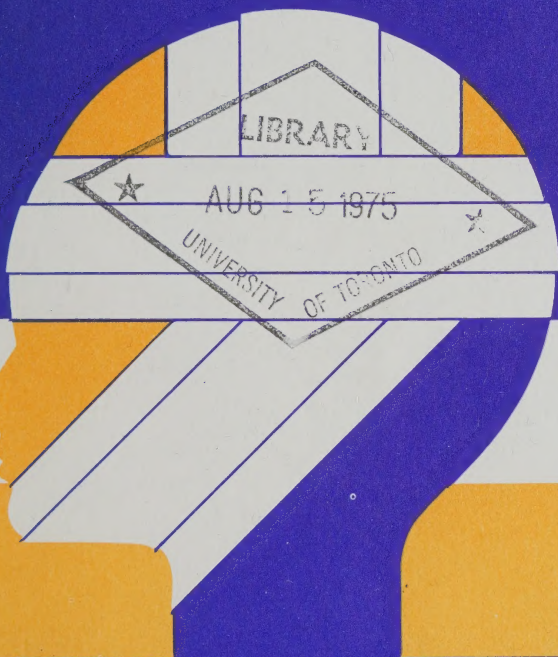
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Credit for the School of Hard Knocks

Equivalency credits for
mature students



If you've looked through the want ads lately, you don't have to be reminded how hard it is to get a good job—or to earn a promotion—especially if you didn't graduate from high school.

Maybe you had to leave high school before you got your diploma because of personal or family circumstances. Maybe you left because you didn't like school, or because something else looked better at the time. Whatever your reason was for leaving, you may be sorry now that you did.

So now what? Chances are you feel that you're too old to go back to school on a regular basis, or you can't because you have a family to support. You probably know that it's still possible to complete your high school education by attending night school classes for adults. You may even be aware of the Ministry of Education's free correspondence courses, which allow you to study secondary school subjects at home in your spare time. These are both excellent ways of working toward the diploma you don't have. But, when you stop to think about all the time it could take, you may wonder if it's really worth the effort.

Something else could be bothering you too. You may have quit school, but you certainly didn't stop learning. You've gained a lot of experience and knowledge on the job and through being exposed to a variety of people and situations.

You may also be involved in an apprenticeship-training program where you work. Perhaps you've taken a home-study course in television repair, or computer programming, or art. And what about things like a Red Cross certificate in first aid? Shouldn't *these* kinds of learning experiences be worth something?

Now, many of them are. Thanks to a new Ministry of Education policy called *Equivalency Credits for Mature Students*, they could mean you're a lot closer to earning a Secondary School Graduation Diploma than you thought possible. But more on that in a moment. First, let's back up a bit.

Since 1972, all secondary schools in Ontario have operated under a system that awards points, or credits, for each course a student successfully completes. A minimum of 27 credits is required for a Secondary School Graduation Diploma, and the average student earns seven or eight credits a year.

What does this mean to you? Well, if you've successfully completed *even one year* of high school—and it doesn't matter where or when—you

could already be entitled to as many as *seven credits* toward your diploma. If you passed your second year of high school, you could be another seven credits nearer your goal. It's up to a secondary school principal (or a school board supervisory official) in your community to determine the exact number of credits your years in high school may be worth. To do this, he or she will need to study your individual school records. The important point is—no matter how long you've been out of high school, the time you spent there is worth something. And that's not all.

If you're 18 years of age or older, and have been out of high school for a year or more, you might also be given credit for some of the learning experiences we mentioned earlier. For example, two credits may be given for the successful completion of each period of a program approved under the Apprenticeship and Tradesman's Qualification Act. And what about a home-study course? If it's comparable to a course that's offered in Ontario secondary schools, and required about the same amount of time and work to complete, it could be worth a credit toward your diploma. Finally, a *maturity allowance* of up to *twelve credits* may be given on the basis of your age and the length of time that you've been out of school.

You cannot obtain your Secondary School Graduation Diploma without further study, however. No matter how many *equivalency* credits you may have been awarded, you must earn at least four additional credits by successfully completing courses that are normally taken during the third or fourth year of a secondary school program. You may earn these credits by attending day school or evening classes, or you may obtain them through correspondence courses or, in some cases, through private study.

There is one other thing you ought to be aware of. Completing your secondary school education won't be easy, but then nothing worthwhile ever is. If you've been away from high school for a few years, you've probably forgotten some of what you learned. You'll also find some of the courses, and the way in which they're being taught today, a little different from what you remember. In other words, there'll be some catching up to do. That's why the principal or supervisory official you talk to may decide to delay granting some of the equivalency credits he feels you may qualify for until you've shown that you're able to work at the level to which you've been assigned.

But once these credits are granted, they become a part of your Ontario Student Record Folder and may be transferred from one secondary school to another within the province.

One final point to remember

Having a Secondary School Graduation Diploma may be an important goal in itself, but, if you intend to pursue further studies, the courses you choose for your final credits could be extremely important. That's why you should discuss your choice of subjects with a guidance counsellor, or with the principal or supervisory official who is granting your equivalency credits. If you intend to obtain a diploma by taking correspondence courses, a student advisor in the Correspondence Courses Section of the Ministry of Education can help you.

If you'd like to get more information on equivalent standing for mature students or find out how close your own Secondary School Graduation Diploma could be, we suggest you talk to the principal of a secondary school in your community or to an official of your local board of education.

Regional offices of the Ontario Ministry of Education are located in the following cities:

Thunder Bay (475-1581)
Sudbury (566-3480)
North Bay (474-7210)
London (472-1440)
Waterloo (885-0440)
St. Catharines (684-1123)
Willowdale (Toronto 491-0330)
Kingston (546-2641)
Ottawa (225-2230)

